Recent Development and Future Directions of Translation and Interpreting Education in China's Mainland

Weihe Zhong

Abstract Translation and interpreting education in China's Mainland came into being with China's policy of reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, and has been developing with leaps and bounds in the twenty-first century. The past few years have not only seen a wave of interest but also exponential growth of translation and interpreting education across China's Mainland. In this paper, the author introduced the recent development and future directions of translation and interpreting education in China's Mainland.

Keywords Translation and interpreting education · BTI and MTI programs in China · Training of interpreters and translators

1 Historical Background of Translation and Interpreting Education in China's Mainland

1.1 Disciplinary Positioning

When talking about translation and interpreting education, we should first have a clear understanding of the disciplinary positioning of translation and interpreting (T&I) education in China's Mainland. The national education system in China's Mainland categorizes disciplines into different fields and different levels. According to the latest version (2012) of the *Disciplines Catalogue of Conferring Doctoral and Master's Degrees* (*Disciplines Catalogue*) of China's Ministry of Education (MOE), there are 13 fields of disciplines of conferring academic degrees. They are: Philosophy, Economy, Law, Education, Literature, History, Science, Engineering, Agriculture, Medical Science, Military Science, Management, and Art. Within each of these fields, there are the first and the second level of discipline. Translation studies are placed within the field of Literature. Twenty years ago, in the 1997 version of the Catalogue, Translation studies were merely an educational direction placed under the

W. Zhong (✉)
Macau City University, Macau, China
e-mail: zhongweihe@vip.163.com

second-level discipline of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. In 2008, translation studies, for the first time, became one of the 13 second-level disciplines under the first-level discipline of Foreign Language and Literature, being the same level as Linguistics and Applied Linguistics and other disciplines such as English Language and Literature, Cross-cultural Communication, and Comparative Literature. Thus, translation studies became a legitimate and independent discipline in China according to the *Disciplines Catalogue* of MOE.

Why disciplinary positioning of translation studies is so important for T&I education in China's Mainland? Because different levels of discipline enjoy correspondingly levels of support from the central and local government, including both financial support and policy support. In China's Mainland, a second-level or above discipline can enroll Ph.D. students in its own right. Such legitimate disciplinary position is a prerequisite for developing a complete T&I education system from BTI (Bachelor of Arts in T&I) to MTI (Master of T&I) and even to DTI (Doctorate of T&I).

1.2 History of T&I Education in China's Mainland

Prior to 1978, no higher learning institutions in China's Mainland could claim to have a real "professional" translation and interpreting education program. Interpreting was seen as a part of foreign language enhancement, and translation, mainly literary translation at that time, was taken for granted as a selective course in the four-year program of a foreign language major. Virtually no research had been done at that time to explore the component of translation and interpreting training in a complete syllabus.

One might argue too, at that time, that China's need for professional interpreters and translators was still small, given the country's limited participation in international affairs that were mainly dominated by the two superpowers and the Western world. It was natural then that only a few excellent graduates from foreign language program in the best tier of universities went on to pursue a career in translation and interpreting, a large proportion of which for political purposes. Translation and interpreting, therefore, at that time, were seen as a skill that any good foreign language learners could naturally master, and there was no need for additional (or professionalized) training.

Considering the fact that the first professional interpreter training school in the world was established in Manheim in 1930 (Pöchhacker 2004), China's Mainland lagged behind in its interpreter and translator training by nearly half a century. The first real effort was taken after the People's Republic of China gained its legalized position in the United Nations in 1971, after which there was almost a sudden surging need for interpreters and translators working at the United Nations.

It was in 1979 that China's Mainland established its first interpreter and translator training program at the then Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, the so-called UN Interpreter and Translator Training Class (*Yi Xun Ban*), which was jointly initiated by the United Nations and the Chinese Government. Since the United Nations Language

Services were directly involved with syllabus design, teaching, examination, and recruitment at the end of the program, the UN Interpreter and Translator Training Class, which was run for a consecutive 12 sessions, was an example of the first effort of "going global" for interpreter and translator training in China's Mainland. The success of the UN program gave rise to the Graduate School of Translation and Interpreting of Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1994.

However, prior to the establishment of the first T&I school in China's Mainland, different universities had already set up their collaboration programs in interpreter and translator training with foreign partners. Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS), for example, started its interpreter and translator training program under the framework of the English Language and Culture Program with British Council in 1993. Other efforts were made predominantly by Xiamen University, who cooperated with Deakin University between 1990 and 1993 to set up an experimental class for interpreter training, and later with Westminster University between 1994 and 1998 for interpreting training and research.

Translation and interpreting studies in China's Mainland soon acquired its academic status, with its first Department of Translation and Interpreting established in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in 1997 (Zhong 2007). This academic status was further enhanced by the establishment of the independent Ph.D. and MA programs in translation and interpreting studies by Shanghai International Studies University in 2004, followed by Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in 2007 and Beijing Foreign Studies University in 2009 respectively.

In the year 2012, the legitimate status of T&I discipline was officially confirmed when *Disciplines Catalogue* was released by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council as mentioned above. With ever increasing interest and enthusiasm in the young (sub-)discipline, translation and interpreting studies scholars soon moved into this specific territory from various other disciplines such as English language, literature, and linguistics. Since then, T&I education in China's Mainland has been gradually shifting from what Gile (2010) calls the "academic pole" to the "professional pole." And it is such a kind of shifting that helped generate the BTI and MTI Education in China's Mainland.

The establishment of degree programs of BTI in 2006 and MTI in 2007, respectively, by the Ministry of Education and the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council was very important for Translation and Interpreting education in China's Mainland.

In 2006, BTI program was approved by the Ministry of Education. Fudan University, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, and Hebei Normal University were the first group of authorized universities. By January 2020, there were 282 colleges and universities with national approved BTI program with a student population of over 30,000. The language pairs of translation and interpreting include English–Chinese, Russian–Chinese, French–Chinese, and Japanese–Chinese, etc.

In 2007, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council approved MTI program in its 23rd Plenary Session. Fifteen colleges and universities were authorized with the program, including: Peking University; Beijing International Studies University; Fudan University; Guangdong University of Foreign Studies; Hunan

Normal University; PLA University of Foreign Language; Nanjing University; Nankai University; Shanghai Jiaotong University; Shanghai International Studies University; Tongji University; Xiamen University; Southwest University; Central South University; and Sun Yat-sen University. By January 2020, there were 253 colleges and universities in China authorized to enroll MTI students. The overall enrollment ever since reaches 40,000. And the language pairs of translation and interpreting include: English–Chinese, French–Chinese, Russian–Chinese, Korean–Chinese, Japanese–Chinese, German–Chinese, Spanish–Chinese, Arabic–Chinese, Thai–Chinese, etc.

Translation and interpreting education in China has received unprecedented attention with more and more universities applying for such programs. With the birth of BTI and MTI education, a systematic disciplinary structure of translation and interpreting education in China's Mainland has come into shape, including Ph.D. in translation studies lasting 3–5 years, MA in translation studies (equal to M.Phil. in translation studies) lasting 2–3 years, MTI with 2 or 2.5 years, BTI 4 years.

The BTI and MTI programs, being differentiated from the T&I course in traditional foreign language and literature programs, have represented China's shift toward professionalized interpreter and translator training.

1.3   BTI and MTI Programs in China's Mainland

BTI program aims to train innovative graduates with global vision, integrity and academic excellence, bilingual competence and cross-cultural communication skills. Graduates of the program should master relevant language skills, professional ethics, basic theories, and translation and interpreting skills. The program also prepares students to utilize the translation tools and technology, and to gain the basic knowledge and operating processes of language services industry. It trains students to be experts in translation, cross-cultural communication, and language services in various fields, including diplomatic, trade, education, culture, science, technology, etc.

MTI program aims to train high-level, practical-oriented and professional translators and interpreters with all-round development in ethics, intelligence, and physical health, who could meet the demand of the country's economic, cultural and social development, so as to enhance the countries' international competitiveness in the era of economic globalization (Zhong and Mu 2008).

As for the disciplinary governance of BTI and MTI Education, in March 2007, the China National Committee for MTI Education was founded. (Renamed as China National Committee for Postgraduate Translation Education in 2011). In October 2010, China National Committee for BTI Education was founded. In 2013, the new English Language Teaching (ELT) Advisory Board under the Ministry Education was elected, responsible for preparing the National Standards of BTI Education Quality. In September 2016, China National Committee for Translation and

Interpreting Education was founded to manage T&I education as whole in China's Mainland.

2 Recent Development of Translation and Interpreting Education in China's Mainland

In order to monitor and guide the sustainable development of T&I education in China's Mainland, a series of guidelines and standards have been released by China National Committee for T&I Education, including *the National Standards of BTI Education Quality* and *the National Guidelines for MTI Education.*

2.1 The National Standards of BTI Education Quality (the BTI Standard)

In the *BTI Standard*, educational objectives are explained from three aspects: qualities, competences, and knowledge.

2.1.1 Quality Requirements

Graduates majoring in translation and interpreting are required to have social responsibility, sound language ability, language sensibility, curiosity, passion for knowledge, creativity, the ability of working under pressure, global vision, humanistic and teamwork spirit, etc.

2.1.2 Competence Requirements

Requirements on competences include language competences, cross-cultural competence, and translation competence.

1. Language competence includes the competence of the foreign language (B-Language) and the competence of the native language (A-Language). Graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should have a good competence of foreign language input and output, be able to understand the radio and TV programs and films at an average speed of speech, be able to read foreign literature and articles of medium difficulty on newspapers, periodicals and electronic media, be able to conduct oral communication accurately and fluently and express personal ideas in a coherent and systematic way, and be able to write different genres of texts in a substantial, smooth, and proper manner. Graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should have a high level of competence of their native language,

and be able to conduct oral and written communication effectively in terms of different genres, topics, and registers.
2. Graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should have acquired cross-cultural communication skills and have the sensitivity of cultural differences, and be able to deal with cultural conflicts by means of proper strategies.
3. Graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should be able to complete a general translation task in an independent or collaborative way by applying basic theories and skills of translating and interpreting and utilizing translation technology and translation tools.

Graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should be able to undertake liaison interpreting tasks of medium difficulty in such areas as cultural exchanges and business meetings, and be able to fulfill conference interpreting tasks of medium difficulty.

Graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should be able to undertake translation tasks of medium difficulty in such areas as politics, economy, society, culture and science and technology, with the target text accurate in meaning and terminology and proper in register and manner.

2.1.3 Knowledge Requirements

Graduates of translation and interpreting should have a multidimensional and encyclopedic knowledge structure, and are especially required to master the knowledge of language, translation and culture.

1. As for knowledge of language, graduates should have a sound knowledge of both the foreign and native languages. As for the foreign language, they should master the knowledge of its phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar, and be familiar with its basic linguistic concepts and theories. As for the native language, they should master the knowledge of its phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar, be able to understand its evolving and developing history and basic features, and be familiar with the basic knowledge of writing in the native language.
2. As for knowledge of translation, graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should master basic concepts and theories of translation, be familiar with basic requirements and methods of translation practice and be able to understand the basic operating mechanism and the code of professional conduct in the language services industry.
3. As for knowledge of culture, graduates majoring in translation and interpreting should be familiar with the knowledge of such areas as culture, history, literature, geography, politics, economy, and society in the foreign language nation, and form the cultural knowledge structure required for the discipline of translation studies.

Moreover, the *BTI Standard* also listed the requirement of educational infrastructure. For example, the ratio of full-time professional teachers to part-time

guest lecturers (from the language service industry) should be 5:2; Computer-aided translation classroom/laboratory should be adequate; Simultaneous interpreting classroom/laboratory should be equipped, etc.

These educational requirements have set up standards for the development of BTI programs in China's Mainland. And the *BTI Standard* has become an important reference for universities to design their T&I curriculum and evaluate related educational quality.

2.2 The National Guidelines for MTI Education

There are mainly three documents on the guidelines for MTI education, i.e., *Guideline for MTI Thesis Writing and Supervision, Guideline for Granting Certification to MTI Guest Lecturers*,[1] and *Guideline for Granting Certification to MTI Internship Partners*.[2]

2.2.1 Guideline for MTI Thesis Writing and Supervision

In the *Guideline for MTI Thesis Writing and Supervision*, the format of MTI thesis is divided into three major types: Internship reports, translation/interpreting practice report, and experiment/survey report (thesis format examples provided in Appendices 1, 2 and 3). The internship reports include three types: project manager internship report, translator/interpreter internship report, and translation editor internship report.

2.2.2 Guideline for Granting Certification to MTI Guest Lecturers

This *Guideline* specifies the requirements for MTI guest lecturers. For lectures of T&I practice courses, the requirements are published translation work or 2 million words of translation practice. For those in interpreting, lectures should have experience of interpreting for large-scale international activities. And they both should have middle or above level of professional ranks and titles, qualification Certificate of Translation Proficiency (Level II) or above and be expert member of Translators Association of China.

As for MTI guest lecturers of Translation Management and Technology courses, the requirements include:

- More than five years of working experiences in translation project management or translation technology.

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[1]https://www.tac-online.org.cn/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=481&id=1925.

[2]https://www.tac-online.org.cn/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=481&id=1926.

- Experiences of managing a translation team of over 20 members or leading a translation technology team of over 5 members.
- Experiences of translation project management of a single case of translating over 3 million words or interpreting project management of a single case of interpreting for over 10 customers.
- Experiences of developing CAT tools or mastering three or more CAT tools.

2.2.3   Guideline for Granting Certification to MTI Internship Partners

This *Guideline* listed the screening standards for MTI programs to select legitimate internship partners for their students, which includes:

- Registered legal institutes with 5 years of T&I businesses
- More than 150 m^2 of office areas
- Annual turnover of more than 2 million RMB yuan
- More than 20 full-time employees, with more than 5 employees having middle or above level of professional ranks/titles, owning Qualification Certificate of Translation Proficiency (Level II) or above, being expert member of Translators Association of China or MTI guest lecturers.

The above three guidelines are of vital importance in leading a health development of master programs in T&I education. In the near future, more guidelines and plans will be put forward.

3   Future Directions of T&I Education in China's Mainland

With decades of development, T&I education in China's Mainland has made great achievements. The new era of economic and social development in China's Mainland has posed new challenges and opportunities. Therefore, the practitioners in T&I education, research, and the professional fields in China's Mainland are collaborating for the following future works: the establishment of DTI education; the development of Test for Translation and Interpreting Majors-Band 8 (TTIM-8) (Mu et al. 2017), the development of T&I scale in China's Standard of English (CSE) to match with Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the development of Translation and Localization Management Training Programs, and the development of the World Interpreter and Translator Training Association (WITTA).

Fig. 1 T&I education
system (Mu et al. 2013)
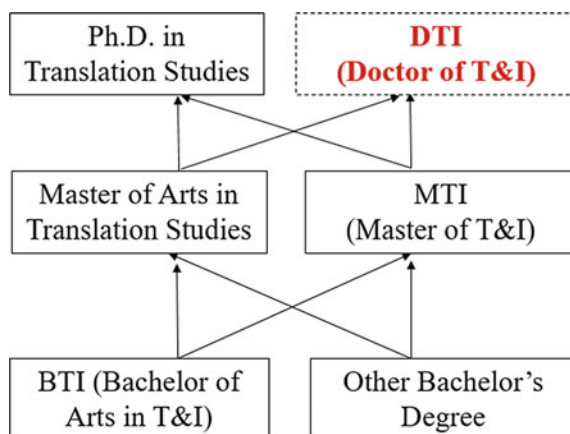
3.1 The Establishment of DTI Education

Currently, T&I education system (Fig. 1) can be divided into professional education path (on the right) and academic education path (on the left). The professional education includes professional degrees, BTI, MTI, and DTI which is in preparation. As for academic path, there are Master of Arts in Translation Studies (TS) and Ph.D. in TS. Figure 1 demonstrates the whole system of T&I education to illustrate the positioning of each degree. At present, there is a lack of DTI program in China's Mainland.

DTI is different from Ph.D. education in its professional-oriented nature. Ph.D. (in Translation Studies) aims at training academic researchers in T&I while DTI aims at training high level practitioners with problem-shooting capabilities, such as managerial professionals, senior practitioners, and senior trainers of language services.

3.2 The Development of Translation and Interpreting Majors-Band (TTIM-8)

Currently, there is TEM-8 (Test for English Majors-Band 8, an achievement test) for English majors, CATTI-2 (China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters Level 2, a proficiency test) for MTI students, but not a test to check the educational quality of students in BTI programs. Therefore, we are designing an achievement test especially for BTI students according to *The National Standards of BTI Education Quality*. The test, combing both translation and interpreting, will be hold in the 8th semester of the four-year BTI program.

As for the part of translation (around 100 min), the test includes: translation-related knowledge: knowledge about translation skills, translation profession, etc., summary writing (in the target language), textual translation: both language directions.

As for the part of interpreting (around 100 min), the test includes: listening comprehension, encyclopedic knowledge, profession ethics (with oral answers), summary retelling (in the target language), and dialogue interpreting and consecutive interpreting.

3.3 The Development of T&I Scale in CSE

The formulation of the CSE is the basis for the construction of a national foreign language proficiency assessment system (Liu 2015). Based on the communicative language ability model, CSE aims to develop a national proficiency scale for English language. However, according to the literature review of the existing language competence scales (Han 2006; Han and Chang 2011), there is only one scale illustrate T&I (i.e., ILR).

Since the teaching environment and education system in China is different from other countries, we cannot simply apply the ready-made language proficiency scales. Moreover, with the large number of T&I programs in China's Mainland, it is necessary to include T&I in CSE.

In CSE, T&I competence is regarded as a mediation competence connecting listening, reading, speaking, and writing. With T&I scales in CSE, we could not only differentiate T&I behavior with other English language activities but also divide T&I competence with numerous concrete descriptors that could be used in teaching, learning, and testing.

3.4 Translation and Localization Management Training Program

We are now also working on the development of translation and localization management training programs in MTI and BTI Education. Take GDUFS, for example, the program targets different levels of students.

- For BTI students
  - 1st year, 2nd semester: the course mainly focuses on the introduction to the translation profession and its related technology
  - 2nd year, 1st semester: basics of computer-aided translation (CAT).

Table 1 Curriculum of translation and localization management program at GDUFS[a]

Course type	Course title	Credit	Credit hour	Semester
Compulsory courses	Advanced computer-aided translation	2	36	1
	Introduction of language services	2	36	2
	Project management of language services	2	36	3
	Localization and internationalization projects	2	36	3
Selective courses	Website localization	2	36	2
	Terminology and corpus management	2	36	2
	Software localization	2	36	3
	Localization desktop publishing	2	36	3
	Project workshop of language services	2	36	3

[a]Refer to the Training Program (revised in June, 2015) for MTI Students of School of Interpreting and Translation Studies, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

- For MTI students
  - 1st year, 1st semester: the course mainly focuses on the theory and practice of CAT
  - 2nd year, 1st semester: workshops on translation tools and technology.

Table 1 shows the detailed curriculum of Translation and Localization Management Program at GDUFS.

3.5 World Interpreter and Translator Training Association (WITTA)

The aims of WITTA are to operate as a strategic partner of such international associations as CIUTI, FIT, and TAC; to bring together governmental, industrial, pedagogical, and academic institutions to promote worldwide interpreter and translator training/education; to pull together translation and interpreting resources and expertise to assist its members in their endeavors to train qualified interpreters and translators.

Its members include educational institutions, research institutes, academic journals, language service providers/companies, governmental departments, professional

organizations, and other related organizations of translation and interpreting from all over the world.

Simply put, with governmental support, industrial motivation, pedagogical contribution, and academic research, WITTA could achieve a synergy effect to a commonly better future of T&I education for our next generations.

Appendix 1: Thesis Format Example of the Internship Reports (Mu and Zou 2013)

1. Overview of the translation internship	1.1 Background: source of the internship, company introduction, and job responsibility	
	1.2 Project description	Project name, project details (language pair, topic/field, word count, time limit, etc.), target user(s): target readers or audience, client's quality requirement, etc.
	1.3 Structure of the report	
2. Preparation of the project	2.1 Demand analysis	Feasibility or cost–benefit analysis
	2.2 Project planning	*Project manager: translation task arrangement (translation, revision, typeset, customer service), project specification, project flowchart etc. *Translator/interpreter: work schedule, quality control, etc. *Translation editor: work schedule, translation quality standard, etc.
	2.3 Technical support: project management tool, telecommunication tool, CAT tools, terminology management tool, etc.	
	2.4 Emergency plan	
3. Process of the project	3.1 Project implementation	
	3.2 Emergency handling	
4. Evaluation of the project	4.1 Feedback and evaluation of the customers	
	4.2 Feedback and evaluation of project members	
	4.3 Self-evaluation	
5. Conclusion	5.1 Problems occurred in the project and their solutions	

Appendix 2: Thesis Format Example
of the Translation/Interpreting Practice Report (Mu
and Zou 2013)

1. Task description	1.1 Background: source of the internship, reason for choosing the text	
	1.2 Task features	Source text: language pair, linguistic style, cultural elements, topic/field, word count, etc.
		Client requirement: format, delivery date, quality standard, etc.
	1.3 Structure of the report	
2. Process description	2.1 Preparation of the task	Task distribution, preparation of CAT tools, glossary, translation strategies, translation schedule, quality control method, emergency plan, etc.
	2.2 Process of the task	Implementation and emergency handling
	2.3 Post-translation matters	Choice of editors, methods of revision (self-revision/editor), etc.
		Feedback and evaluation of the client
3. Case analysis	3.1 Problems occurring in the practice	Different types of problems, representative examples
	3.2 Solutions	Corresponding translation strategies
	3.3 Discussion	
4. Conclusion	4.1 Unsolved problems 4.2 Implications	
5. References	Documents or literature cited in the report	
6. Appendices	Appendix 1 Source text/audio	
	Appendix 2 Target text/audio	
	Appendix 3 Glossary	
	Appendix 4 CAT tools used (if applicable)	
	Appendix 5 Contract of the translation/interpreting task	

Appendix 3: Thesis Format Example of the Translation Experiment/Survey Report (Mu and Zou 2013)

1. An overview of the experiment/survey	1.1 Background	Rationale, objectives, etc.
	1.2 Methods	Hypothesis, major questions to be answered, methods of the experiment/survey, etc.
	1.3 Structure of the report	
2. Process of the experiment/survey	2.1 Preparation	Time, place, tools, etc.
		Choice of subjects, conditions, sampling, etc.
		*Experiment design: pilot, pre-test, variables control, post-test, etc. *Survey design: survey questions, pilot and revision, etc.
		Emergency plan
	2.2 Implementation and emergency handling (if applicable)	
3. Results and discussion	3.1 Data collection	
	3.2 Data description	
	3.3 Data analysis and discussion	
4. Conclusion	4.1 Problems occurred in the project and solutions	
	4.2 Unsolved problems and reflections	
	4.3 Implications	
5. References	Documents or literature cited in the report	
6. Appendices	Appendix 1 Original data in the translation experiment/survey	
	Appendix 2 List of tools used in the experiment/survey	

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Weihe Zhong is Former President of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, now President of Huangpu Academy, Distinguished Chair Professor of the City University of Macau and Co-President of Kingold Group. Professor Zhong is a leading scholar in interpreting and translation studies and the education of interpreters and translators in China. He is Committee Member for Discipline Development and Academic Programs under the Ministry of Education, Chairman of the National Supervisory Committee for Interpreting and Translation Programme under the Ministry of Education of China. He is also Vice Chairman of China National Committee for Translation and Interpreting Education and Executive President of Translators' Association of China (TAC). He is an award winner of the New Century Outstanding Talents Program of the Ministry of Education, Leading Scholar of the "New Century One Hundred, One Thousand, and Ten Thousand Talent Project," and an expert enjoying special subsidy from the State Council. He has published extensively in interpreting and translation studies and foreign language education.